

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 181720Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9603

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T ROME 2383

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, VS, VN

SUBJECT: VATICAN VIEWS ON VIETNAM

REF: A) STATE 032458; B) SAIGON 1590; C) ROME 1698

1. HEWING CLOSELY TO EXCELLENT MATERIAL PROVIDED IN REFTELS A AND B, WE MADE FORCEFUL PRESENTATION TO ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI FEB 18 OF U.S. ESTIMATE OF PRESENT SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM, LEAVING NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER IN CASAROLI'S MIND THAT ADMINISTRATION REMAINS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO PROVIDING POLITICAL, MILITARY AND MORAL SUPPORT FOR RVN AND THAT, IN OUR ESTIMATE, SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE DETERMINED AND ABLE TO CARRY ON SUCCESSFUL FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION. CASAROLI WAS OBVIOUSLY GRATEFUL TO RECEIVE PROMPT AND FORCEFUL USG REASSURANCES AND ADMITTED THAT PESSIMISTIC VIEWPOINT HE HAD EXPRESSED LAST WEEK DERIVED MAINLY FROM VARIOUS RVN SOURCES, INCLUDING AMBASSADOR HIEU. CASAROLI SUGGESTED THAT SAIGON'S TECHNIQUE MAY BE TO EXAGGERATE SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION IN ORDER TO ASSURE CATHOLIC SUPPORT IN DIFFICULT MOMENTS. CASAROLI CONTRASTED THIS RVN TACTIC UNFAVORABLY WITH USG APPROACH WHICH WAS TO DESCRIBE SITUATION AS HONESTLY AS POSSIBLE.

2. WE EXPRESSED TO CASAROLI THE IMPORTANCE USG AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT ATTACH TO CONTINUED VATICAN SUPPORT FOR SAIGON'S JUST CAUSE, NOTING HOW WELL PROF. ALLESANDRINI'S ARTICLE IN JAN. 19 "OSSERVATORE DELLA DOMENICA" WAS RECEIVED. GIVEN

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FACT THAT RANK AND FILE SOUTH VIETNAMESE REMAIN FIRMLY ATTACHED

TO CAUSE OF DEFENDING THEIR HOMELAND AGAINST COMMUNIST AGRESSION,
WE CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH, AS OPINION MAKER
IN SOUTH, DO NOTHING WHICH COULD UNDERMINE THIS DETERMINATION,
AND THAT EMANATIONS FROM VATICAN LIKE ALESSANDRINI'S ARTICLE ARE
MOST HELPFUL IN BOLSTERING THE MORALE AND FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE
SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

3. COMMENT: THE INFORMATION PROVIDED CASAROLI WILL NO DOUBT
PROVE EXTREMELY USEFUL IN GIVING VATICAN MORE BALANCED PICTURE
OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENING IN VIETNAM. CASAROLI AND HIS ASSOCIATES,
ALTHOUGH PERHAPS RELUCTANTLY AND AGAINST THEIR BETTER JUDGMENT,
MAY HAVE BEEN BEGINNING TO BELIEVE SOME OF THE PESSIMISITC
RHETORIC PICKED UP FROM OFFICIAL SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOURCES.
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